

## Message Text

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61

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TO USMISSION NATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 249816

EXDIS

FOL REPEAT MOSCOW 14979 SENT ACTION SECSTATE INFO  
LENINGRAD BELGRADE BERLIN USBERLIN BUCHAREST BUDAPEST  
MUNICH PRAGUE SOFIA WARSAW PARIS OCT 18

QTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 14979

EXDIS

E.O. 11652 XGDS-1

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, FR, UR

SUBJECT: BREZHNEV' HEALTH

REFWC USNATO 5638

1. ALTHOUGH, AS REPORTED SEPTTEL, BREZHNEV SEEMED ANIMATED AND IN GOOD SPIRITS WHEN I OBSERVED HIM AT THE KREMLIN RECEPTION OCTOBER 17, ANDREANI, QUAI DIRECTOR FOR EUROPEAN AFFAIRS (WHO HAS HAD A NUMBER OF OPPORTUNITIES OVER THE PAST SEVERAL YEARS TO OBSERVE BREZHNEV AT CLOSE RANGE) TOLD ME THAT THE HAS IMPRESSION BREZHNEV IS SHOWING HIS AGE. DURING BILATERAL TALKS, ANDREANI SAID, BREZHNEV SEEMED TIRED AND NOT A WELL MAN. ON THE OTHER HAND, HE LOOKED AND PERFORMED MUCH BETTER THAN DURING FRANCO-SOVIET  
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BILATERALS AT HELSINKI. HE DEFINITELY HAS SOMETHING WRONG WITH

HIS THROAT, ANDREANI NOTED, PROBABLY BRONCHITIS. DURING TALKS, BREZHNEV (AS HE DID AT HELSINKI) TENDED TO READ FROM HIS BRIEFS AND FREQUENTLY REPEATED HIMSELF, WHEREAS IN PAST HE WOULD HAVE SPOKEN MUCH MORE EXTEMPORANEOUSLY. (THIS TALLIES WITH MY OWN OBSERVATION OF BREZHNEV AT RECENT MEETINGS. ANDREANI ADDED THAT THE FRENCH FELT THAT BREZHNEV'S THOUGHT PROCESSES WERE STILL LUCID, BUT THAT THEY LACKED THE SHARPNESS WHICH THE FRENCH HAD OBSERVED PRIOR TO HELSINKI.

2. REGARDING USNATO 5638, WHICH REPORTED A PESSIMISTIC ASSESSMENT OF BREZHNEV'S CONDITION AND PRONUNCIATION BY THE CANADIAN EMBASSY HERE, IT MAY BE WORTH NOTING THAT ALL THINGS ARE RELATIVE AND THAT THE ASSESSMENT WAS MADE NOT BY AMBASSADOR FORD, DOYEN OF THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS AND AN EXPERIENCED AND RELIABLE OBSERVER, BUT BY HIS DCM, WHO HAD JUST ARRIVED FOR HIS FIRST TOUR IN MOSCOW AND HAD NEVER BEFORE SEEN BREZHNEV OR HEARD HIM SPEAK. ON THE LATTER SCORE, OUR OWN IMPRESSION - AND THAT OF SOVIET CONTACTS AS WELL - IS THAT BREZHNEV'S DELIVERY OF HIS ACADEMY OF SCIENCES SPEECH OCTOBER 7 WAS HIS BEST PERFORMANCE IN A LONG WHILE (FBIS HAS THE VTR), WHICH SUGGESTS THAT HIS DENTAL TREATMENTS MAY FINALLY BE HAVING A RELATIVELY SALUTARY EFFECT.

STOESSEL

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